Let's suppose it is possible to choose where to direct your own gaze. Suppose that you could free yourself, if only for a moment, from the tyranny of social networks that impose not only what you see and talk about, but also how you see and how you talk. Then, suppose that you lift your gaze higher: from the immediate to the local to the regional to the national to the global. Can you see that far? Yes, it's chaos, confusion and disorder out there. Then let's suppose you are a human being, not a digital application that quickly scans, classifies, orders, judges and sanctions, and as such, you choose where to look... and how to look. It could be (this is just a hypothetical) that looking and judging aren't the same thing, such that you don't just choose where to direct your gaze, you also decide what your inquiry is, shifting the question from "Is this good or bad?" to "What is this?" Of course, the former implies a juicy debate (are there still debates?), which in turn leads to "This is good—or bad—because I say so." Or perhaps to a discussion about what good and evil are, and from there to arguments and citations with footnotes. Yes, you're right, that's better than resorting to "likes" and "thumbs up", but what I'm proposing is to change the starting point: choose where to direct your gaze.

For example: you decide to direct your gaze to Muslims. You could choose to look, for example, at those who perpetrated the Charlie Hebdo attacks, or at those who are currently marching through the streets of France to voice and demand their rights. Since you've read this far, it's likely that you would opt for the "sans papiers/[^1]". Of course, you also feel obligated to declare that Macron is an imbecile. But, that quick look upwards aside, you again turn to look at the migrants' protest encampments and marches. You ask how many of them are out there—seems like a lot, or a few, or too many, or just enough. Your interest has moved from their religious identity to their numbers. Then you ask yourself what they want, why they struggle. Here you have to decide whether to turn to the media and social networks to find out... or whether to listen to the migrants directly. Suppose you could talk to them. Would you ask them about their religion, or how many of them are there? Or would you ask them why they left their homeland and decided to come to these distant lands with a different language, culture, laws and customs? Perhaps they will answer you with a single word: war. Or perhaps they will give details of what that word means in their reality. War. You decide to look into it: war where? Or better yet, why war? They overwhelm you with explanations: religious beliefs, territorial disputes, theft of natural resources or simply stupidity. But you aren't satisfied yet and you ask who benefits from the destruction, the depopulation, the reconstruction and the repopulation. You come across the names of many different corporations. You look into these corporations and discover that they are located in several countries and that they manufacture not just weapons, but also cars, interstellar rockets, microwave ovens, packing and shipping services, banks, social networks, "media content", clothing, cell phones and computers, underwear, organic food and non-organic food, shipping companies, online sales, trains, heads of state and cabinet members, scientific and non-scientific research centers, hotel and restaurant chains, fast food, airlines, thermolectric plants, and, of course, "humanitarian" aid foundations. You could say, then, that the responsibility lies with humanity or the whole world.

But you ask yourself whether the world or humanity aren't also responsible for the march and the migrant encampment, for that resistance. You conclude that, yes, maybe, it's possible that a whole system is responsible: a system that produces and reproduces the pain as well as those who inflict it and those who endure it.

Now you return your gaze to the march making its way through France. Suppose that there are few, very few people, that there's just one woman carrying her baby. Do you care about her religious beliefs, her language, her clothing, her culture, her customs? Does it matter that she's just one woman carrying her baby in her arms? Now forget about the woman for a moment and focus your gaze just on her little one. Does it matter whether it's a boy, girl, or other? Does the child's skin color matter? Perhaps you discover then that what matters is its life.

Now go further. After all, you've gotten this far, so a few more lines won't do you any harm. Not much at least.

Suppose that woman speaks to you and you have the privilege of understanding what she says. Do you think she'll demand that you ask her forgiveness for the color of your skin, for your religious beliefs or lack thereof, for your nationality, your ancestors, your language,
your gender, or your customs? Are you in a hurry to apologize to her for being who you are? Do you think she’ll forgive you and then you
can go back to your life with that debt fully paid? Or that she won’t forgive you, and you’ll be able to say, “Well, at least I tried, and I am
sincerely sorry for being who I am”?

Or are you afraid that she won’t talk to you, that she’ll just look at you silently and you’ll sense that her gaze asks, “And you?”

If you arrive at this reasoning-feeling-anguish-desperation, well then, I’m sorry, there’s no cure for you: you’re a human being.

Thus assured that you’re not a bot, repeat this exercise on the Island of Lesbos, the Rock of Gibraltar, the English Channel, Naples, the
Suchiate River and the Rio Grande.

Now turn your gaze and look for Palestine, Kurdistan, Euskadi[iv] and Wallmapu[iv] Wallmapu[iv] and Wallmapu[iv]. I know, it’s dizzying…and there are
many more places to look. But in these places there are people (whether many or few, too many or just enough) who also struggle for
life. And they understand life as inseparably tied to their land, their language, their culture, their customs; what the National Indigenous
Congress [CNI] taught us to call “territory,” which isn’t just a piece of land. Wouldn’t you like those people to tell you their stories, their
struggle, their dreams? I know, perhaps you’re thinking it would be easier just to check Wikipedia, but isn’t it tempting to hear it from
them directly and try to understand?

Return now to what’s between the Suchiate River and the Rio Grande. Go to a place called “Morelos.” Then turn your gaze to the
municipality of Temoc, and focus on the community of Amlcingo. Do you see that house? That’s the home of a man who was called
Samir Flores Soberanes. In front of that door, he was murdered. His crime? Opposing a megaproject that represented the death of the
life of the communities to which he belonged. No, I haven’t misspoken: Samir was killed not for defending his individual life, but for
defending the life of his communities.

What’s more, Samir was murdered for defending the life of yet unthought generations. For Samir, as for his compañeras y
compañeros, and for the originary peoples that make up the CNI and for us, nosotros, nosotras, nosotroas Zapatista, the life of a
community doesn’t take place only in the present: it is above all what is to come. The life of a community is something that is built today,
but built for tomorrow. That is, life in community is something that is passed on to future generations. Do you think that the debt of his
death is paid if the intellectual and material authors of the murder ask for forgiveness? Do you think that his family, his organization, the
CNI, nosotr@s, will be satisfied by the criminals’ apology? “Forgive me, I put the price on his head for the hit men to take him out; I’ve
always been quite the gossip. I’ll try to be better—or not. All right then, I’ve asked for forgiveness, now get rid of your protest
campamento so we can finish the thermolectric plant, or else a lot of money is going to be lost.” Do you think that’s what they’re waiting
for, that that’s what we’re waiting for; that that’s why they struggle and why we struggle: for them to apologize? For them to declare, “Oh
sorry, yes, we murdered Samir and what’s more, this megaproject is murdering your communities. Our bad. All right, forgive us already.
Though if you won’t forgive us it doesn’t matter anyway, the project must go on”?

It turns out that the same people who would ask forgiveness for the thermolectric plant are behind the badly named “Mayan” Train, the
“Trans-isthmus Corridor”, the dams, the open pit mines and the electric power plants. They’re the same people who close borders to
stop migration flows triggered by the wars that they themselves encourage. They’re the same ones who pursue the Mapuche people,
massacre the Kurds, destroy Palestine, and shoot African Americans; who directly or indirectly exploit workers in every corner of the
globe; who cultivate and glorify gender violence and prostitute children; who spy on you to know what you like and sell it to you (and if
you don’t like anything, to make you like it); the same ones who destroy nature. They’re the same people who want to make you, us, and
everyone else believe that responsibility for these global crimes being carried out lies with particular nations and religions, with
resistance to progress, with conservativists, with certain languages, histories, or ways of being, or that everything can be synthesized in
one individual (an individuo... or individua – don’t neglect gender equality!).

If you could go to all those corners of our moribund planet, what would you do? Well, we don’t know what you’d do, but we Zapatistas,
nosotros, nosotras, nosotroas would go to learn. To dance, too, of course, but I don’t think the two are mutually exclusive. If that
opportunity existed we would be willing to risk everything for it: not just our individual lives but our collective life. And if that possibility
didn’t exist, we would do everything possible to create it, to construct it, as if it were a vessel. Yes, I know it’s crazy—unthinkable even.
Would have thought that the destiny of people resisting a thermolectric plant in a tiny corner of Mexico could be of interest to
Palestinians, to the Mapuche, to the Basque people, to migrants, to African Americans, to a young Swedish environmentalist, to a
Kurdish woman warrior, to women struggling in other parts of the planet; to Japan, China, the Koreas, Oceania and Mother Africa?

On the contrary, shouldn’t we go, for example, to Chabikel, in the Yucatan Peninsula, to the office of Equipo Indignación [Team
Indignation] and demand, “Hey! You guys are religious and have white skin: ask our forgiveness!” I’m almost certain they would respond,
“No problem, but you’ll wait your turn because right now we’re busy accompanying those who are resisting the Mayan Train and suffering
displacement, persecution, prison and death.” And they would add:

“Also, right now we’re dealing with the accusation by the Supreme Leader that we’re financed by the Illuminati as part of an
interplanetary conspiracy to stop the 4T.”[v][v] What I am sure of is that they would use the verb “accompany” and not “direct,”
“manage” or “control.”

Or should we invade Europe with a cry of “Surrender, pale-faces!” and then proceed to destroy the Parthenon, the Louvre, and the
Prado, and instead of sculptures and paintings, fill everything with Zapatista embroidery, especially Zapatista face masks—which, can I
just say, are both effective and attractive. Instead of pasta, seafood and paella we could impose a diet of elote, cacaté, and yerba mør;
instead of soda, wine, and beer we could introduce obligatory pozole[v](#_edn5); and for whoever is caught out on the street without a ski mask, either a fine or prison time (one or the other, no reason to go overboard). We could also announce, “Listen rockstars, from now on you play marinera! And we only want to hear cumbias, no more reggaeton (tempting, right?). Hey you two, Panchito Varona[v](#_edn6) and Sabina[vii](#_edn7)—everybody else join the chorus—let’s hear “Cartas Marcadas”[viii](#_edn8), on loop, even if it’s 10pm, 11, 12, 1am, 2am, 3am… we’ll cut it off then because we have to get up early tomorrow! And you over there, fugitive ex-King[ix](#_edn9), leave those elephants alone and get cooking! Squash soup for the whole court! (I know, isn’t my cruelty is exquisite)”?

Now you tell me: do you think the nightmare of those above is that they be forced to apologize? Could it be, rather, that their worst nightmare is to disappear, to cease to matter, for no one to care about them anymore, that they become nothing, that their world collapses without making a sound and without anyone remembering them, erecting statues, museums, chants, or days of remembrance? Could it be that that possible reality is what really causes them panic?

”To understand our determination and the size of our audacity, imagine that death is a doorway. There are endless speculations about what’s behind the door—heaven, hell, limbo, nothing—and dozens of descriptions of all of those options. Life, then, could be imagined as a path to that door. The door—death that is—would be in that case a point of arrival… or an interruption, an impertinent slash of absence wounding the air of life.

One would arrive at that door, then, via the violence of torture and murder, an unfortunate accident, the painful half-closing of the door in sickness, through fatigue or through desire. That is, while the majority arrive to that door without wanting to or meaning to, it is also possible for it to be a choice.

Among the originary peoples that today are Zapatistas, before, death was a door introduced early, almost as of birth. Children often reached that door before five years of age, crossing over with fever and diarrhea. What we tried to do on January 1, 1994, was push that door into the distance. We did of course have to be ready to go through the door in our effort to achieve that goal, although that wasn’t what we wanted. Since then, our determination has been and continues to be to push that door as far into the distance as possible, to “extend life expectancy” as the experts say. Dignified life, we would add. We try to distance that door to the point that it can be pushed off to the side, very far ahead of us. That’s why we said from the beginning of the uprising that “we would die in order to live.” After all, if we do not hand down life—that is, a path—to the next generations, then what did we live for?

To hand down life.

That is precisely what Samir Flores Soberanes tried to do, and that is what is encapsulated in the struggle of the Frente de Pueblos en Defensa del Agua y de la Tierra de Morelos, Puebla y Tlaxcala [People’s Front in Defense of the Water and Land of Morelos, Puebla, and Tlaxcala] and their resistance and rebellion against the thermoelectric plant and the poorly named “Integrated Project for Morelos.” The government’s argument against their demand to cease and remove that death project has been that it will lose a lot of money.

What’s happening in Morelos summarizes the current conflict across the entire world: money versus life. In that confrontation, in that war, no honest person can be neutral: one is on the side of money or one is on the side of life.

We could conclude, then, that the struggle for life isn’t an obsession among originary peoples. It’s more like a vocation… a collective one.

All right then. Cheers and don’t forget that forgiveness and justice are not the same.

From the mountains of the Alps, wondering where to invade first: Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy, Slovenia, Monaco, Liechtenstein? Just kidding… or not.

SupGaleano practicing his most elegant wretching.

Mexico, October of 2020.

From the notebook of the Cat-Dog:

A Mountain on the High Seas. Part I: The Raft

“In the seas of all of the worlds of this world, there were mountains that moved above the water and upon them the obscured faces of women, men, and others.”

After a third failed attempt, Maxo paused thoughtfully for a few seconds before exclaiming, "We need a rope." "Told you" replied Gabino. The remainders of the raft dispersed and collided in the water, running into each other in accord with the current of the river which, true to its name of "Colorado," took on the tint of the red clay of its banks.

They called in a milliciano cavalry battalion which arrived to the rhythm of "Cumbia Sobre el Río Suena" [Cumbia by the River] by the great Celso Piña. They tied several ropes together, making two large sections, and sent one team to the other side of the river. Tying their ropes to the raft, both groups could control the direction of the vessel without it breaking up, pulling the pile of logs along a river that was itself quite unaware of the navigation effort.

The illogical act in process had emerged after we had decided upon the invasion … oh pardon me, I meant the visit to the five continents. So the deed had been done. When the idea was voted on and SupGaleano said, "You all are crazy, we don't have a boat," Maxo responded, "We'll build one." And immediately the proposals started to flow.

As with all things absurd in Zapatista territory, the construction of the "boat" got the attention of Defensa Zapatista's gang.

On the fourth attempt, as the boat weakened almost immediately, Esperanza declared, with her legendary optimism, "The compañeras are going to die wretchedly." (She had come across that word in a book and understood it meant something horrible and irreparable, and began to use it indiscriminately: "My mom fixed my hair wretchedly," "The teacher marked up my homework wretchedly," and so on).

"The compañeras too!" Pedrito piped up, though not entirely sure gender solidarity was appropriate when the destiny was... wretched.

"Nah," Defensa replied, "Compañeros are easy to replace, but compañeras... where would we even begin? A real compañera... that's not just anybody!"

Defensa's gang was positioned strategically, not to contemplate the ups and downs of the CCRI [Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee] members' attempts to build the raft, but rather so that Defensa and Esperanza could hold onto both Calamidad's hands after the little girl had twice already tried to throw herself into the river to rescue the boat. Both times she was intercepted by Pedrito, Pablito, and the beloved Armando. The one-eyed horse and the cat-dog were dumbfounded from the beginning, worrying unnecessarily. As soon as SupGaleano saw the gang arrive, he assigned three militia units to the bank of the river and instructed, with his typical smiling diplomacy, "If that little girl makes it into the water, you're all dead."

After some success on the sixth attempt, the CCRI members tried filling the boat with what they called trip "essentials" (a kind of Zapatista survival kit): a bag of tostadas, panela [cane sugar], a gunny sack of coffee, some maize prepared for pozol, a bundle of firewood, and a piece of plastic in case of rain. After thinking a bit they realized something was missing, and without delay the marimba was brought to the banks.

Maxo approached el Monarca and SupGaleano who were looking over some designs that I'll tell you about on another occasion and said, "Hey Sup, you're going to have to send a letter to the other side and tell them to get a rope and tie it up to make a long piece and throw one end over here so that from both banks we can get the "boat" moving. But they're going to have to get organized because if each side just throws their rope out whichever way, it's not going to reach. We're going to have to be organized and tie the ropes up properly."

Maxo didn't wait for SupGaleano to emerge from his confusion and try to explain that there was a big difference between a log raft tied together with reed and a boat that could cross the Atlantic.

Maxo left to go supervise the trial run of the raft loaded with supplies. They were debating who should get on to test it out with people on board, but the river threshed about with an ominous rumbling, so they opted for making a rag doll and tying it to the middle of the raft. Maxo was acting as the naval engineer because years ago, when a Zapatista delegation went to support the Cucapá encampment, Maxo got into the Gulf of California. He hadn't explained to anyone that he almost drowned because his ski mask stuck to his nose and mouth and he couldn't breathe. Like an old sea dog he explained to the others:

"Pollito con papas... it's not going to be easy. It's going to be wretched. We're going to have to die wretchedly."

SupGaleano was trying to decipher how to say "rope" in German, Italian, French, English, Greek, Basque, Turkish, Swedish, Catalan, Finnish, etc., when Major Irma approached and said, "Tell them they are not alone [solas]." "Or alone [solos]!" Marijose added, who had come to ask the musicians to compose a cumbia version of Swan Lake. "A happy version, one you can dance to, so their hearts are not sad." The musicians asked what "swans" were. "They're like ducks but prettier, like they stretched out their necks and got stuck that way. They're like giraffes but they walk like ducks." "Can you eat them?" the musicians asked. It was lunchtime and they had only shown up to deliver the marimba. "Oh for pity's sake, no, swans are for dancing!" The musicians muttered among themselves that a version of "Pollito con papas[x](#_edn10)" might work. "We'll study up," they said and went to have their pozol.

Meanwhile, Defensa Zapatista and Esperanza convinced Calamidad that given that SupGaleano was busy, his hut was probably empty and it was very likely that he had a package of honeybuns hidden away in his tobacco tin. Calamidad was doubtful so they had to tell her that they could play popcorn (making corn kernels explode like firecrackers) when they got there. Off they went. The Sup saw them wander off in that direction but he wasn't worried, the honeybun hideaway was impossible to find, buried as it was under bags of moldy tobacco. He looked at Monarca and gestured to one of the diagrams. "You sure that's not going to sink? It's going to be heavy."

Monarca paused and thought a moment and then replied, "Hm, it could." He then added seriously, "They should take balloons just in case, so they can float."
The Sup sighed and said, "What we need more than a boat is some sense." "And more rope!" added SubMoy who had arrived just as the raft, weighed down with cargo, sank.

While the CCRI members contemplated the remains of the shipwreck from the riverbank and the marimba floated by, bottom up, someone said, "Good thing we didn't put the sound system on there, that would have been expensive."

Everybody applauded when the rag doll floated to the surface. Somebody, with some foresight, had put two inflated balloons under her arms.

I give my word.

Meow-Woof.

Videos:
1. It's a depressive thought that many people have and continue to go to war against those who disagree with them as to what is on the other side of that door.

As a result of our human curiosity we contemplate and dialogue about what is on the other side. Many forget that what is imperative is not necessarily to find out what is on the other side while we are still on this side, we will all get the opportunity to find out up close and personally what is beyond that door frame.

What is imperative though is how we live while on this side of the door, for me that is to struggle for humanity.

Thanks to all who make it possible for us to get these translated communiques.

Deja un comentario

Nombre (requerido)

eMail (no será publicado) (requerido)

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